

# Potential Impact of Influenza Pandemic on A Private Medical Office: Suggested Actions

Prepared for Fairfax County Health Department  
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- A pandemic has the potential to disrupt the service provision by your practice in a variety of ways. It is important to develop a plan in advance.
  - Assign a coordinator to develop and write a plan
  - Educate and train staff

# ***INFECTION CONTROL***

## *Transmission of Influenza to Staff And Other Patients*

- More likely to be exposed to large quantities of virus
- Prevention and infection control in the office will be critical

# ***INFECTION CONTROL***

## ***Transmission of Influenza to Staff And Other Patients***

- Signage - informing patients of infection control measures in the office.
  - Place signage on front doors, in waiting area, in hallways, and in each exam room
- Alcohol based hand gel at door entrance
- Require all persons entering office to wash hands (or use gel) on entry
- Provision of tissues (for cough hygiene) and non-contact trash receptacles for appropriate disposal

# ***INFECTION CONTROL***

## *Transmission of Influenza to Staff And Other Patients*

- **Segregation of flu patients**
  - If possible, separate entry door for potentially infected patients
  - Separate waiting rooms or dedicated space at least 3 feet from other sections of waiting rooms
  - Distribute masks to symptomatic patients (have adult and pediatric sizes)
  - Consider separate staff dedicated for the handling of flu patients
  - Use of recovered (immune) staff to deal with flu patients
  - Designating separate blocks of time for non-influenza and influenza related patient care

# Infection Control Measures for Staff

- Educate staff regarding transmission and prevention
- Mask, gown, gloves and eye protection for direct contact – droplet precautions
- Wash down exam room hard surfaces with 1:50 bleach between patients
- Alcohol based hand gel in each examining room
- Consider prophylactic antiviral therapy for staff

# Infection Control Measures for Staff

- Remove magazines and toys from the waiting room
- Have individual headsets for telephone use for front desk
- Have alcohol and wipes near telephones and wipe down between uses
- Have alcohol wipes near each computer keyboard and mouse and wipe down regularly

# ***PERSONNEL:***

## ***Absenteeism and Extended Duration***

- Expect first wave of pandemic to last 3-4 months, with peak of 4-6 weeks.
- Expect absenteeism of health workers to be at least 25% at any one time.



# ***PERSONNEL***

- Recommend cancellation of outside activities (meetings, etc) for all staff
- Cancel meetings and teaching
- Define minimum safe staffing levels
- Identify retired or prior employees who might be able to be on a recall list to work on short notice
- Suspend provision of routine and non-essential medical care
- Provide longer medical refills when safe to minimize repeat calls or visits during pandemic

# ***PERSONNEL***

- **Child care issues**
  - talk to staff about emergency plans
  - plan to set up a mini day care (for well children only) in a back office or conference room
  - consider providing a babysitter for your staff so they can come to work
- **Determine minimum number of employees necessary to operate**
  - Reassess your flow and paperwork, etc to minimize need for employees and minimize contact with infected patients.
- **Determine at what point would you close your office**
- **Liberal leave policy for ill employees**

## ***FLOW: Increase Workload (Surge)***

- Plan to establish and staff telephone hotlines.
- Consider establishing telephone triage with “telecommuting” – i.e. nurses answering phones from home. (Calling into voice mail to retrieve messages and returning patients calls from home.)
- Develop training modules and protocols and algorithms for hotline staff.
- Designating separate blocks of time for non-influenza and influenza related patient care.

## *FLOW: Increase Workload (Surge)*

- If you have more than one office, consider establishing one office for influenza patients only
- Establish more frequent but shorter shifts for both staff and physicians
- Determine policy for dealing with “walk-ins”, maximum numbers in waiting areas, etc.
- Have readily available handouts for community based resources

# ***SUPPLIES***

- Supply – identify needs (mask, gowns, hand hygiene, medical supplies) Have a plan to request resources when normal channels resources have been exhausted.
- Contact your supplier now and ask what their plans are and how they can support you during a pandemic
- Plans should include stockpiling *at least* two extra weeks of supplies.

# ***FINANCIAL***

## **Plan for cash flow shortage**

### **Increase expenditures for supplies and possible staff overtime**

- Consider establishing prolonged payment terms with suppliers now prior to the crisis

### **Decrease billing and collections secondary to personnel shortage**

- Consider increasing electronic filing of claims now prior to crisis